

for Private First Class Diego Rincon there is waiting for him an extraordinary crown of righteousness. Rincon has been awarded posthumous U.S. citizenship and I am proud to cosponsor pending legislation that will grant automatic citizenship for all foreign-born soldiers killed fighting for the United States.

God Bless Diego Rincon and God Bless America.

PROTECTION OF LAWFUL COMMERCE IN ARMS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. BRAD CARSON

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1036) to prohibit civil liability actions from being brought or continued against manufacturers, distributors, dealers, or importers of firearms or ammunition for damages resulting from the misuse of their products by others:

Mr. CARSON of Oklahoma. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks. I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in support of H.R. 1036, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act.

As my esteemed colleagues have discussed, H.R. 1036 would prohibit civil lawsuits from being brought against gun manufacturers by parties that have been injured by the unlawful use of firearms.

Mr. Chairman, I am a great believer in personal responsibility. It is one of the key principles upon which America was founded. The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act would strengthen this great notion.

Imposing liability on an entire industry for harm caused solely by the unlawful actions of others is an abuse of the United States legal system—it undermines public confidence in our judicial system and threatens the viability of law-abiding companies.

Frivolous lawsuits against the firearm industry are nothing more than an attack on the Second Amendment. It seems a logical anti-gun tactic to me, if you can't lawfully prevent the sale of guns, then you go after the people who sell guns and make them afraid to sell their lawful products for fear of incurring substantial financial liability. Thus far, these frivolous and merit-less lawsuits have had little success in court. Their only success is in placing an enormous financial burden on gun manufacturers. However, these litigation costs are then passed onto consumers and makes it more difficult law-abiding citizens to own guns. In the end, the ones who suffer the most are law-abiding consumers.

H.R. 1036 would help protect our second amendment rights by protecting legitimate businesses that comply with Federal, State and local gun laws. It is time to stop these frivolous lawsuits that threaten to bankrupt a responsible American industry by blaming the firearm industry for the actions of criminals. I urge my colleagues to support the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CRIME VICTIMS RIGHTS AMENDMENT

HON. STEVE CHABOT

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be here today during National Crime Victims' Rights Week with this outstanding coalition to support what I consider to be one of the most important legislative efforts in the 108th Congress—the Crime Victim's Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution.

I'd like to start off by thanking the original cosponsors, some of whom are here. I'd also like to thank Senators KYL and FEINSTEIN for their leadership in the Senate and Attorney General Ashcroft for his continued support of this much needed amendment. And most importantly, I would like to thank the representatives of the victims groups who will speak shortly. Thank you all for coming today to show your support for the Victims Rights Amendment.

Many of the people here today know all too well that violent criminals damage or destroy the lives of innocent victims. According to the Department of Justice, in the year 2001, there were almost 1.5 million violent crimes committed in the United States. On any day, on any street corner, a mother, father, son or daughter can become the next victim of a rapist or murderer. For too many years these victims' voices have been silenced in a criminal justice system that recognizes only the rights of the accused. Thankfully, that is all beginning to change.

Currently, 32 States, including my home state of Ohio, have passed victims rights amendments to their constitutions. We have also enacted Federal victims rights statutes. Unfortunately, these laws have not been consistently applied, and many victims still are not treated with dignity and respect.

A constitutional amendment is absolutely needed to help facilitate a balance between the rights of victims and those of defendants. Only through an amendment to the Constitution can victims receive the justice they deserve.

This amendment would empower crime victims by allowing them to confront their assailants in court and at sentence or parole hearings. It would protect victims by requiring that they be notified about the release or escape of the perpetrator from custody and by requiring that the victim's safety be considered in determining a release from custody. Finally, the amendment would restore victims by guaranteeing them the right to seek restitution from their attackers.

These rights, like others guaranteed in our Constitution, would become fundamental, and citizens of every state would be protected.

I want to stress that nothing—I repeat, nothing—in this amendment will undermine or weaken the long-established rights of defendants under our Constitution.

For far too long, victims of crime in this country have had to stand on the courtroom steps with meaningful justice right beyond their reach. Not allowed to view proceedings in person. Not permitted to speak out on behalf of a murdered loved one. Not even notified when a violent abuser is turned loose.

Crime victims deserve to be treated better. They deserve to be treated with dignity in our criminal justice system. In the last Congress, I introduced this amendment in the House. And working with Senators KYL and FEINSTEIN and Attorney General Ashcroft, I think we made great progress in raising awareness of this critical issue. This year, I believe we can do even better. With the strong support we have received from President Bush, I am hopeful that we can pass this amendment and fortify an important truth: that victims must have their own inalienable rights under our Constitution.

FREEDOM'S OBLIGATION

HON. SHERWOOD L. BOEHLERT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit the words of my constituent, Jessica Mattiace of Moravia, NY, for submission into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Jessica was chosen as the winner of the Veterans of Foreign Wars broadcast scriptwriting contest for 2003.

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW, of the United States and the Ladies Auxiliary conduct a Voice of Democracy audio/essay competition designed to give high school students the opportunity to voice their opinion on their responsibility to our country. This year, more than 80,000 secondary school students participated in this contest competing for the 59 national scholarships. The contest theme for this year was "Freedom's Obligation."

I applaud the VFW for continually providing this outlet for young people to share their personal views and coordinating this worthy competition each year. I also congratulate Ms. Mattiace on her achievement and wish her best of luck in her future educational ventures.

FREEDOM'S OBLIGATION

(By New York Winner—Jessica Mattiace)

It echoes through our courtrooms, sings in our churches, whispers in our hearts—freedom, the very lifeblood of America, the very marrow of our homeland. For this right our fathers fought, and for it they died. So that you and I might say we truly are free, a life was yielded, a heart ceased to beat, a soul, enflamed with the ardent desire to be loosed from the bounds of oppression and persecution, was severed from its mortal frame. How often is such a blessing taken for granted! How often is it abused! How often is it reduced to a right to do whatever one pleases. But this is not what so many men and women gave their lives for. They sought to create a land where all would be granted equal rights, but not where liberty would be considered license for immorality. In our quest to protect and preserve the freedom that has been endowed to us by God, and guaranteed to us by the blood of our fathers, we have created another sort of enslavement, the enslavement to such false ideas of freedom. Freedom has not been granted to us for nothing, and it is our duty to defend it at every moment.